

HEIR, Friday 11th September 13.45 – 14.35

The Kingston University Big Read



What are the barriers and benefits to implementing a shared reading programme?



Background and objectives

A SADRAS research project aiming to:

- breach any divide between those coming to Kingston from different backgrounds and walks of life
- enhance a sense of community among new students
- connect the 5 KU faculties; administrative and academic staff – with students and with each other
- promote reading for pleasure
- BUT to do this through a scheme appealing to all, without making any group feel particularly targeted or stigmatised

Through using the shared reading of a single book:

Why in this way?

Such schemes are common in the US where research has shown that those involved:

- are more likely to enrol
- feel engaged early
- are less likely to drop out
- feel more connected locally

The significant and long-established benefits of reading for pleasure

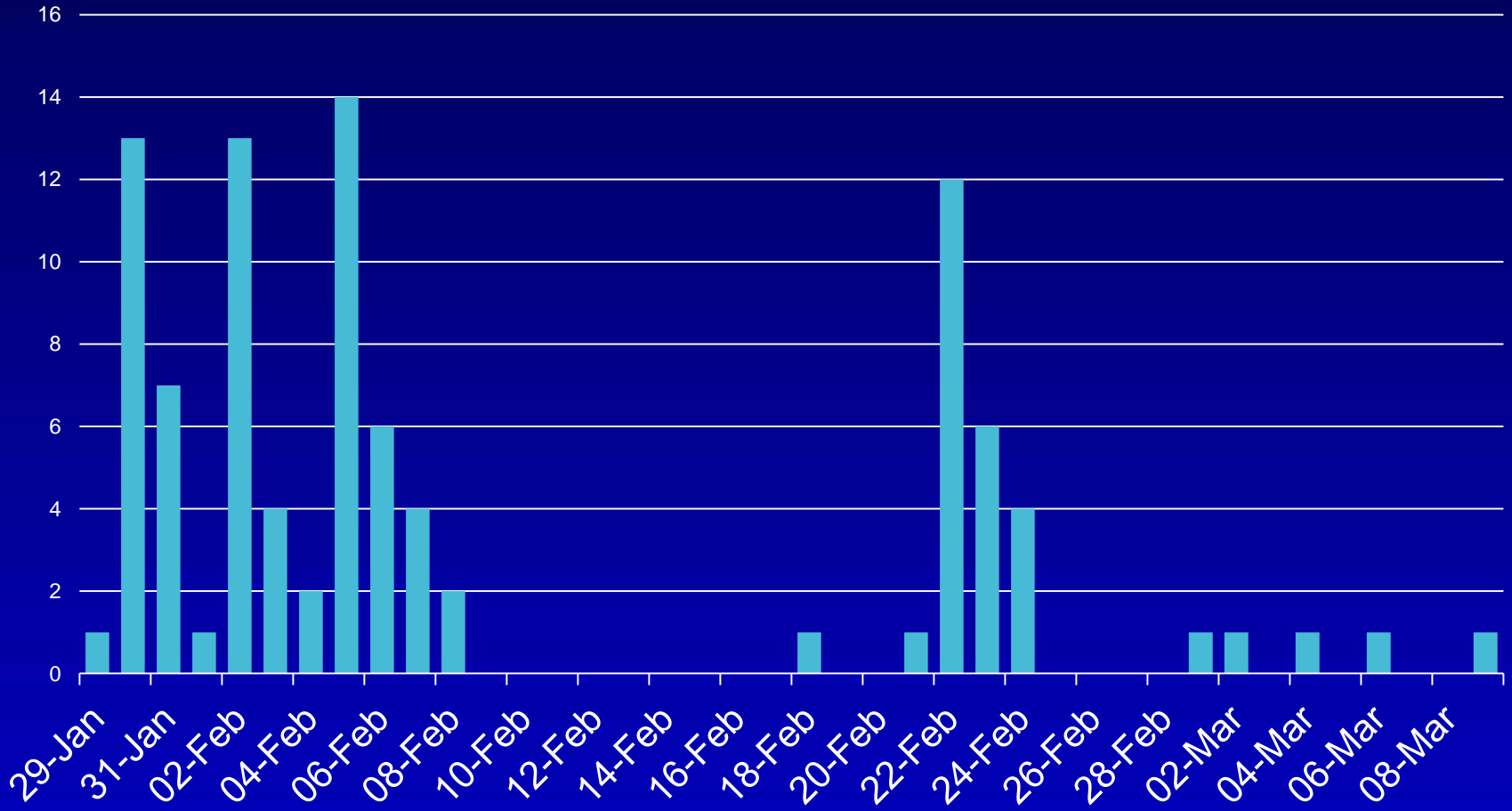
A cost-effective means of connecting staff and students

Methodology of feasibility study:

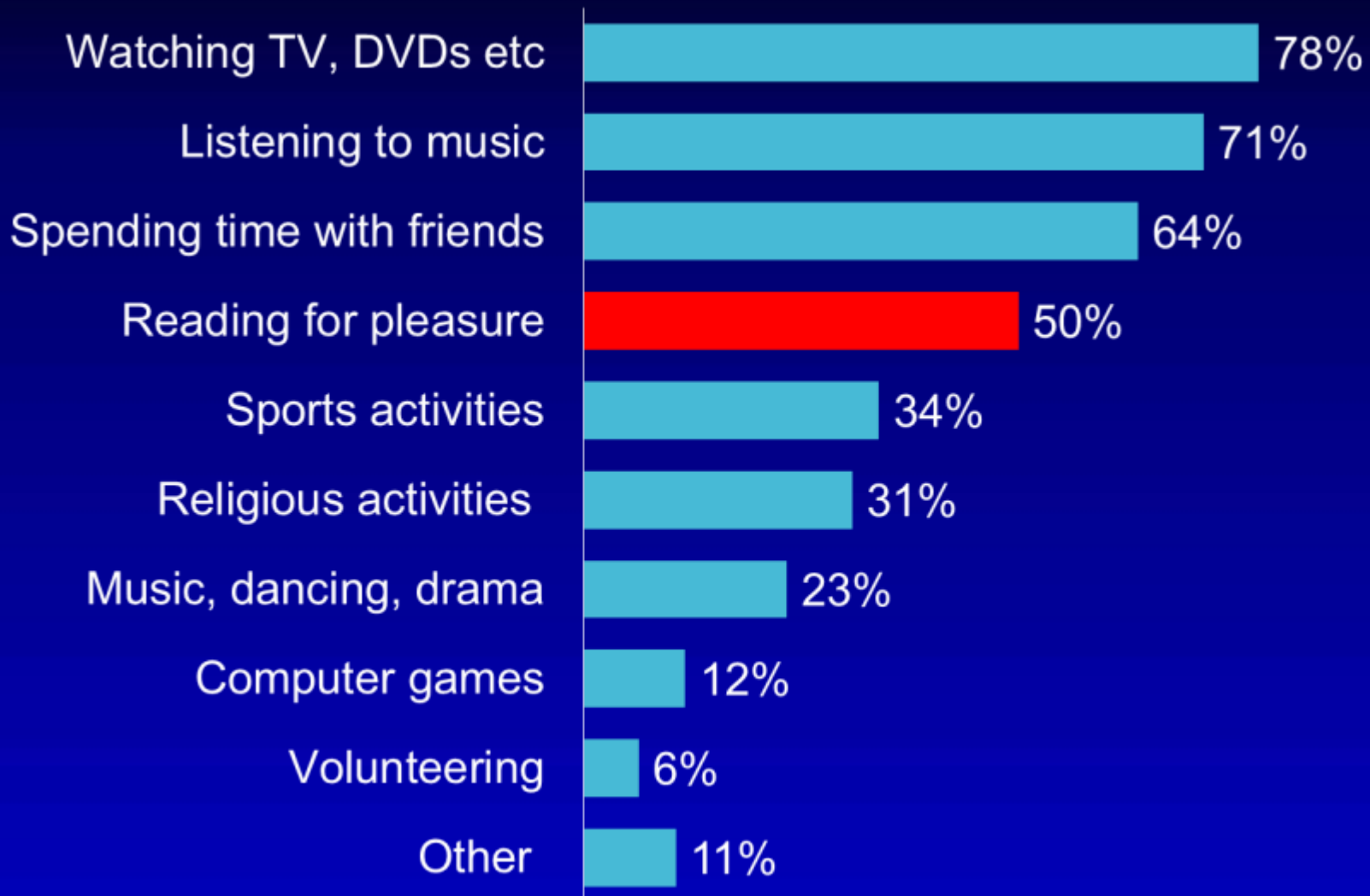
- Interviews with VC and Student Engagement and departmental support
- Meeting with Baroness Gail Rebeck of Quick Reads:

‘Your aim is to engage the Kingston community through shared imagination into a shared world.’
- Online ‘leisure-time’ survey of first-years from KU’s five largest undergraduate cohorts to investigate:
 - leisure time activities
 - attitudes to reading and reading habits
 - reaction to proposed scheme

Survey: Responses by date

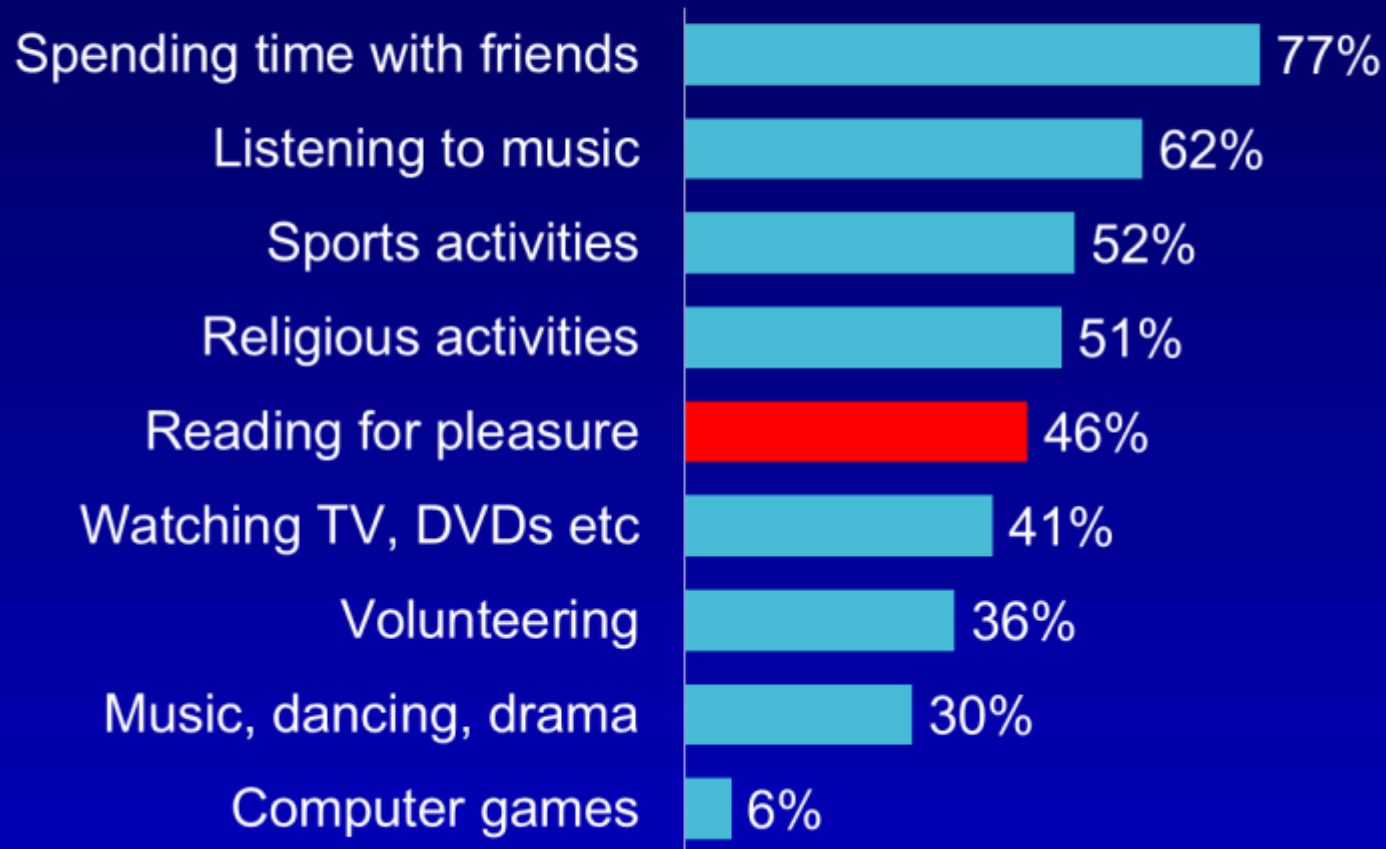


Q1: Which of the following do you get involved with on a regular basis? (n=94)

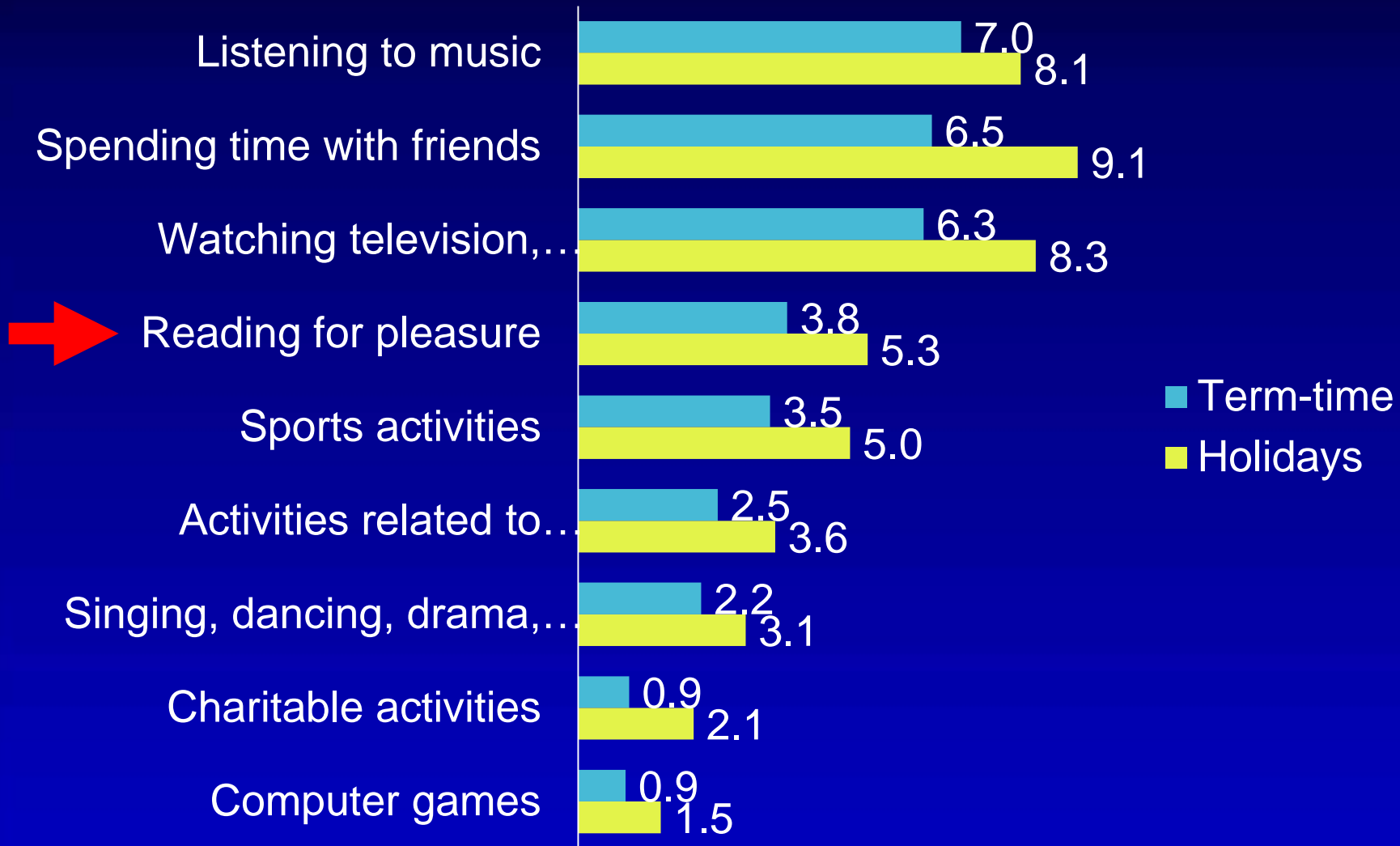


Q2 How important are these activities to you?

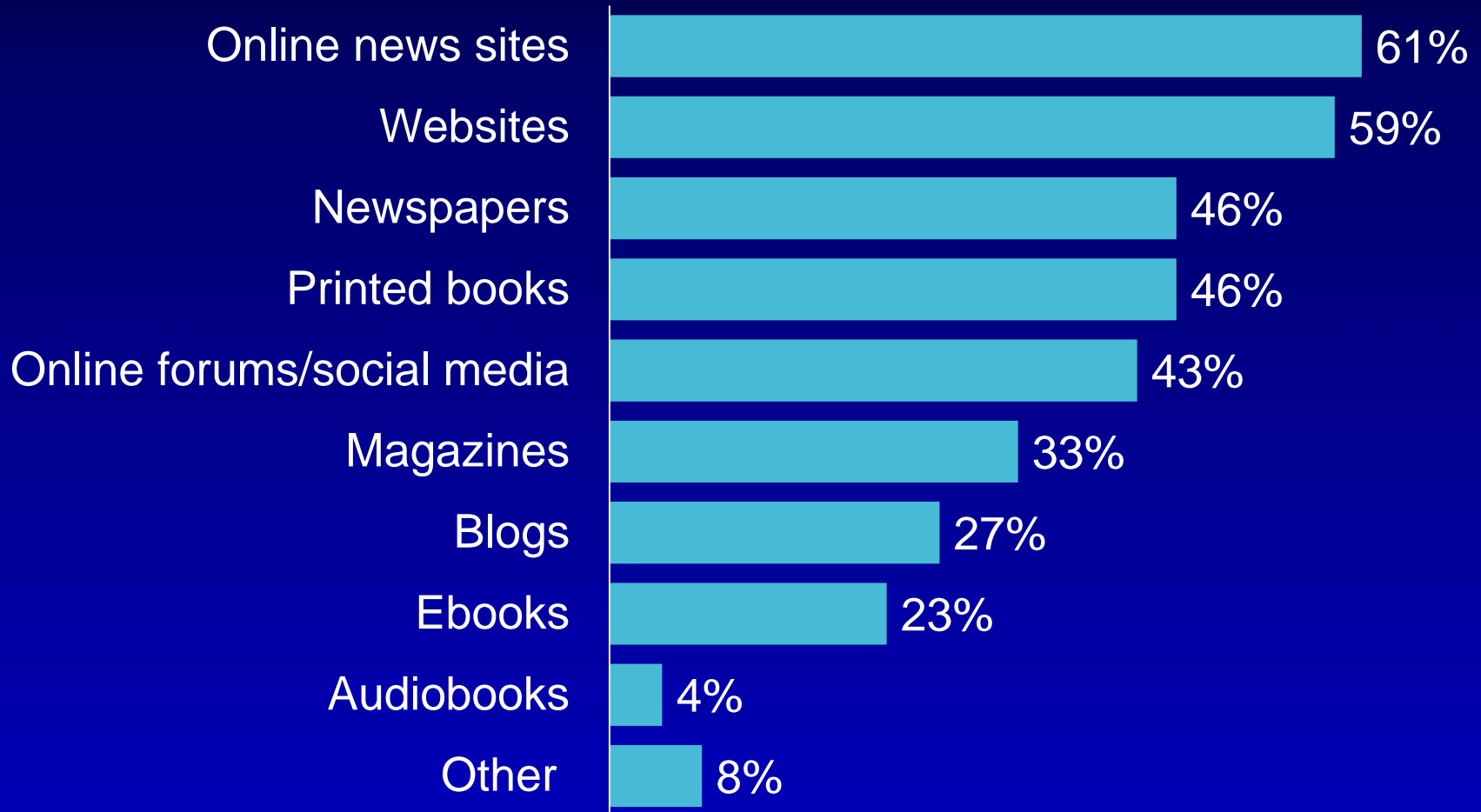
% saying Very important/Important
(n=95)



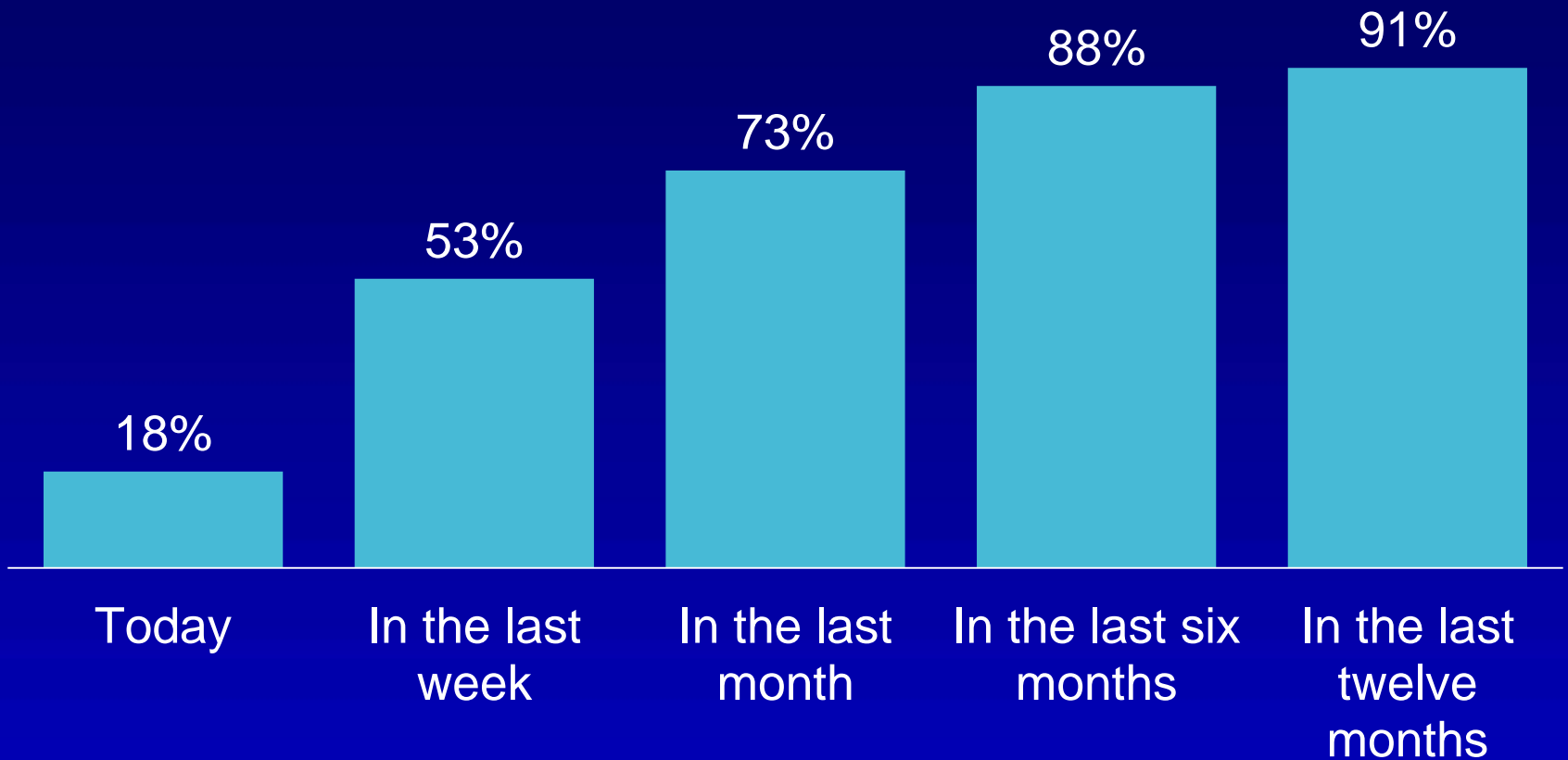
Q3 and Q4: Average time spent per week on each activity in term-time and the holidays (n=95)



Q5. What kind of material do you read for pleasure on a regular basis?



Q7. When did you last read a book for pleasure? (Cumulative %, n=91)



Q8-14 Thinking about this book

Type: Novel 52%, How to / Information 21%, Non-fiction 18%,
Travel 0%, Other 7% (n=85)

Format? Print 76%, Ebook 23%, Audio 1% (n=90)

Discussed with anyone?: Yes 58%, No 42% (n=88)

If yes who?: Friend 63%, housemate 17%, parent 17%,
another relative 24%, a stranger 4%, other 4% (n=75)

If yes was the experience: Very enjoyable 11%, enjoyable 43%
somewhat enjoyable 18%, not enjoyable 0%
(n/a 28%, n=76)

Did anyone notice and comment? Yes 43%, No 57% (n=88)

Source: Online purchase 25%, Bookshop 23%, Gift 15%,
Family/friend 11%, University library 7%, Public library 6%,
High street retailer 6%, Charity shop 5%, Supermarket 3%,
Leisure venue 1%, Other (including online reading) (n=88)

Q8-14 Thinking about this book

Type: **Novel 52%**, How to / Information 21%, Non-fiction 18%,
Travel 0%, Other 7% (n=85)

Format? **Print 76%**, Ebook 23%, Audio 1% (n=90)

Discussed with anyone?: **Yes 58%**, No 42% (n=88)

If yes who?: Friend 63%, housemate 17%, **parent 17%**,
another relative 24%, a stranger 4%, other 4% (n=75)

If yes was the experience: **Very enjoyable 11%**, **enjoyable 43%**
somewhat enjoyable 18%, not enjoyable 0%
(n/a 28%, n=76)

Did anyone notice and comment? **Yes 43%**, No 57% (n=88)

Source: Online purchase 25%, Bookshop 23%, Gift 15%,
Family/friend 11%, University library 7%, Public library 6%,
High street retailer 6%, Charity shop 5%, Supermarket 3%,
Leisure venue 1%, Other (including online reading) (n=88)

Q15: How important was reading for pleasure for you when you were aged.... ?

(Four point scale, n=84)

	Very Important/ Important	Not Important
Under 11	52	13
12 - 16	61	7
17+	66	7

Q16 and Q17: How likely are you to read during these times?

	Term-time	Holidays
Before you go to bed	41	45
Weekends	38	45
Weekdays	34	49
Using public transport	33	29

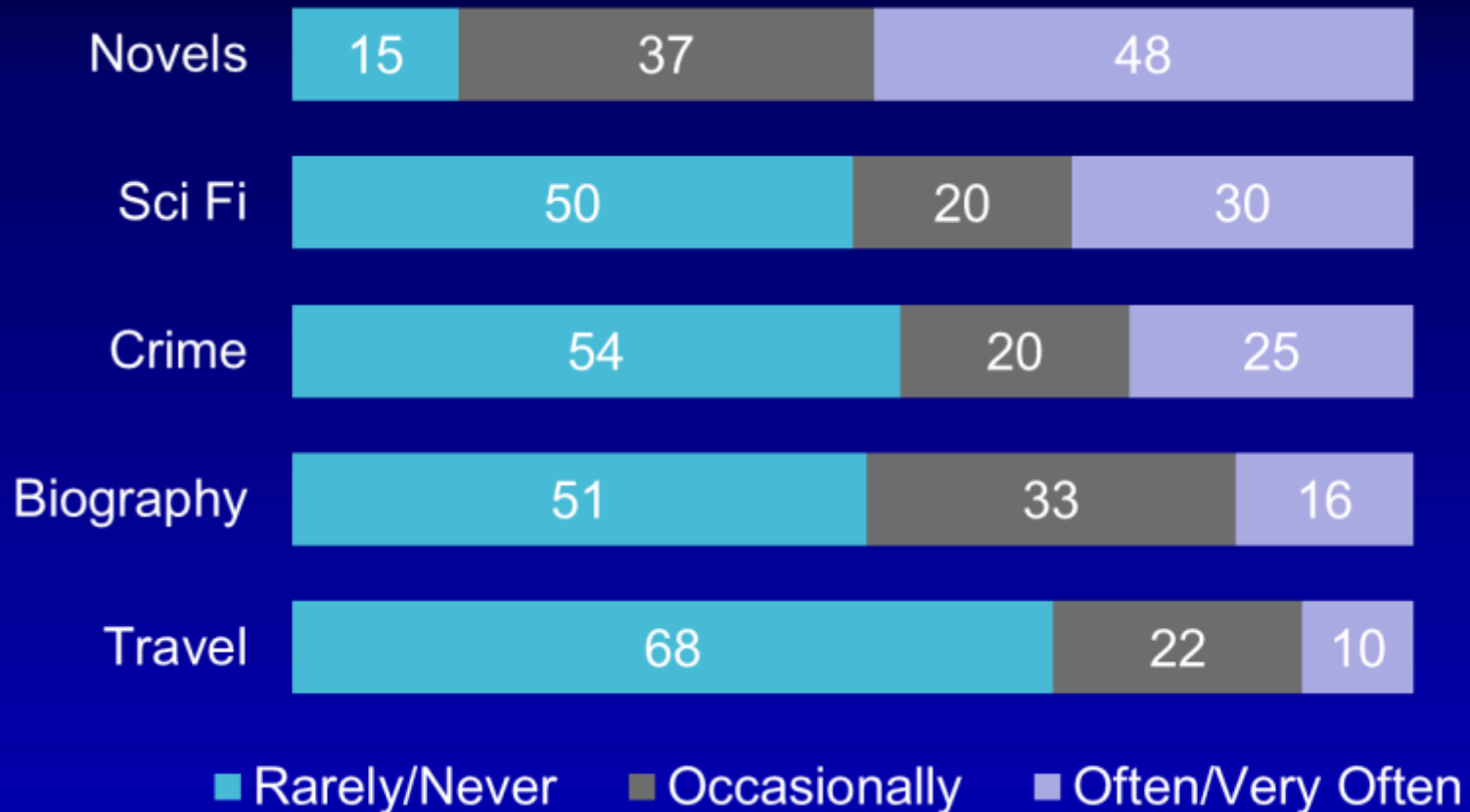
Q19 Did you read for pleasure during Freshers' Week/Induction Week (n=83)

Yes 30%

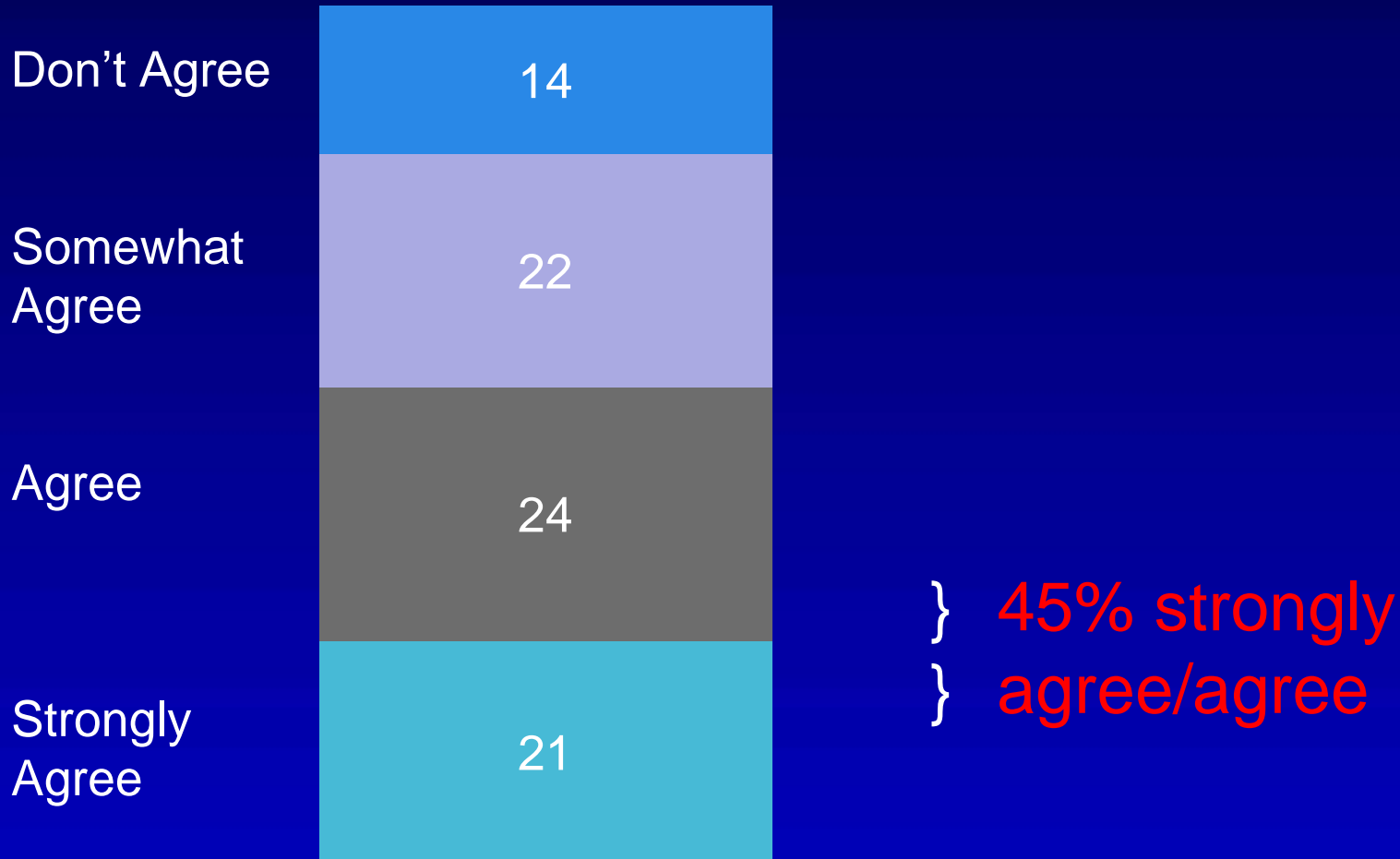
No 47%

Can't remember 12%/ Did not attend 11%

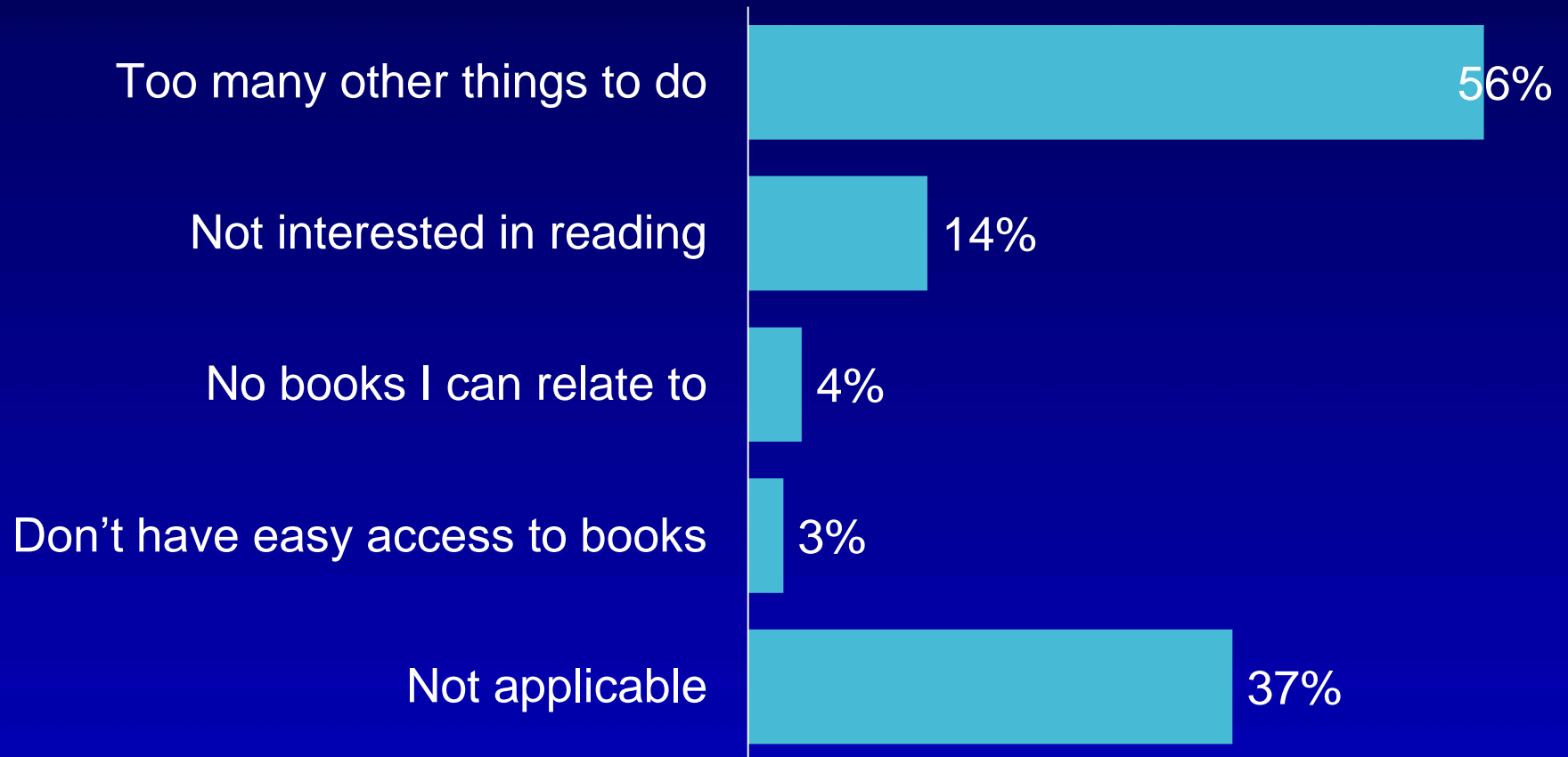
Q18 How often do you read various types of books?



Q20 How much do you agree with 'I wish I had more time to read for pleasure' ?



Q21 If you do not read for pleasure what are things that stop you?



2 additional comments: Depression / Pressure of university work

Preamble to Q22

We hope that the information provided through this survey will help us consider the feasibility of setting up a university-wide reading scheme. This would offer all new students a free book and encourage them to read it before they arrived at university. During the first few weeks of term there would be an opportunity to talk about the book with other staff and students.

Q22 Do you think this is an interesting idea?

Very interesting/Interesting	46%
Somewhat interesting	31%
Not interesting	5%

Q23 If this scheme had been operating would you have taken part? (n=83)

Yes	58%
Unsure	34%
No	8%

Would you have taken part? By accommodation-type

- Private student hall of residence 86%
- Shared accommodation (e.g. a flat) 71%
- Your family home 65%
- University hall of residence 19%

Q25 What do you think might dissuade students from taking part?

53 comments

- No time / too busy / too many assignments / too much reading anyway
- Lack of confidence / laziness / character
- Only if the book was course-related / interesting
- Something for children!
- No desire to read / books can be boring
- Cost / time of the meeting

Q24 How do you think a reading scheme might help the University?

53 comments including:

- ✓ Networking /connections / meeting people / something in common / sense of community / inclusion even before arriving
- ✓ Confidence building / practice in speaking up
- ✓ Building vocabulary / grammar / knowledge / thinking skills / essay writing / exam preparation
- ✓ Beneficial for students who: need to improve English / do mostly practical work / have not read for a while
- ✓ Encourages reading
- ✓ Offers 'time out'

Key learnings from the survey:

- Reading for pleasure is important to a significant proportion of first-year students
- Encouraging reading for pleasure is likely to reignite former reading habits rather than start them from scratch
- There is strong evidence of support for the proposed scheme across most demographics
- The scheme would be of particular value to those *not* living in university halls of residence
- Particular attention needs to be paid to the timing when questionnairing students

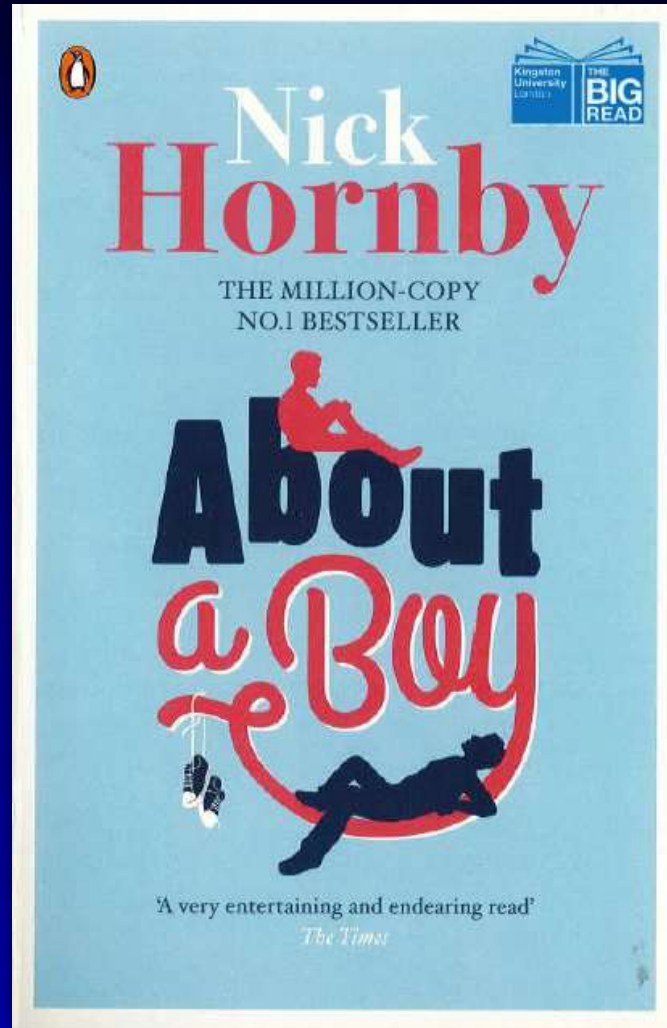


Kingston
University
London

THE
BIG
READ

This year's book is...

The author, Nick Hornby is an alumnus of Kingston University

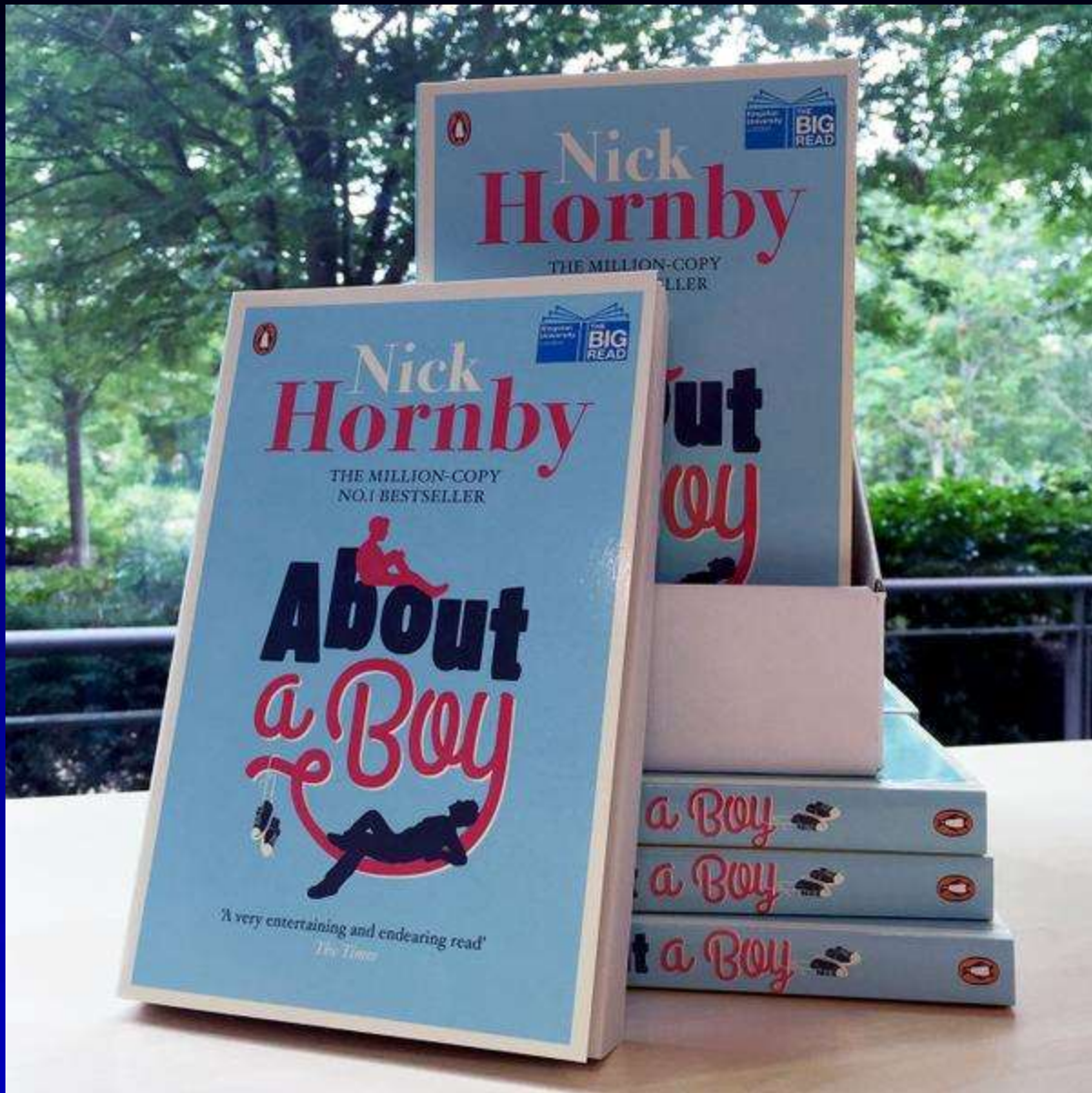


The book is an international best seller and has sold over a million copies

The book was published in 1998 and made into a film in 2002

Special Edition for KU Students

Nick Hornby wrote the letter that went to all new KU Students



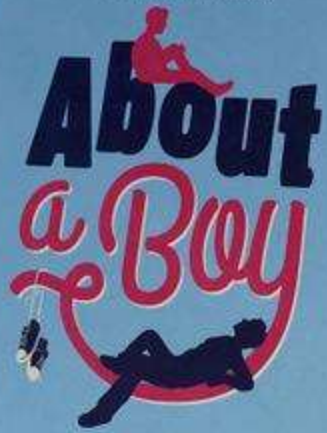
Nick
Hornby

THE MILLION-COPY
SELLER

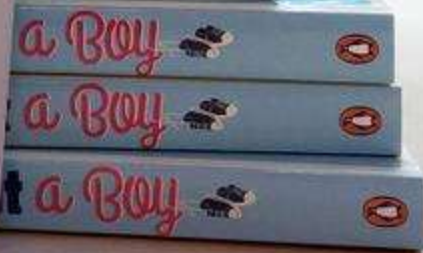


Nick
Hornby

THE MILLION-COPY
NO.1 BESTSELLER



'A very entertaining and endearing read'
The Times



What happened next?



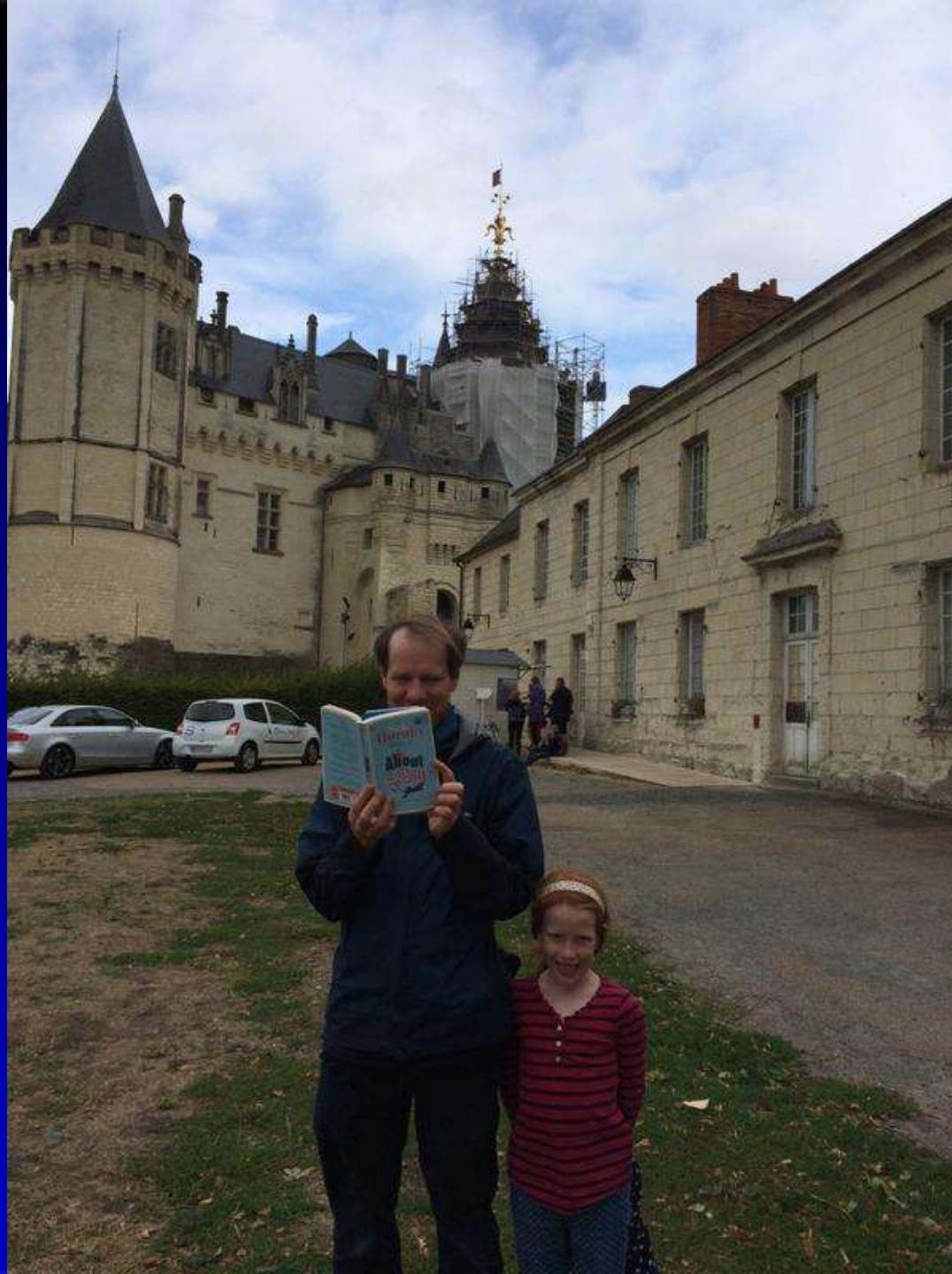
The KU Big Read is rolling out, right now

- Nick Hornby's *About a Boy* chosen as first title
- Special edition bearing university logo/additional material printed
- Sent to all arriving first-years; under- and post-graduates
- Made available to all staff who wanted to participate
- Discussions/events planned for Welcome Week
- Presentation by the author
- Discussion of how faculties can be encouraged to get involved
- Balloon debate on how material relates to *all* staff interests

Unexpected findings:

- **Much greater staff buy in than anticipated:**
e.g. adopted by the entire KU finance department for team-building
Included within KU Induction
Reception staff particularly keen
Reprint swiftly needed
- Cross-faculty engagement; creative adaptation for teaching/assessment
- Communications staff very keen on developing related initiatives
- A very cost-effective marketing campaign for the University
- An exportable innovation, maybe used by other universities





Looking forward #KUBigRead is now:

- an established part of the KU brand
- promoting cross-university communication and collaboration
- supported, with a budget, as a two-year pilot project
- being monitored by various means
- in development for next year – how should we choose the new title?
- floating. While we consider where should it sit within the University

Questions?